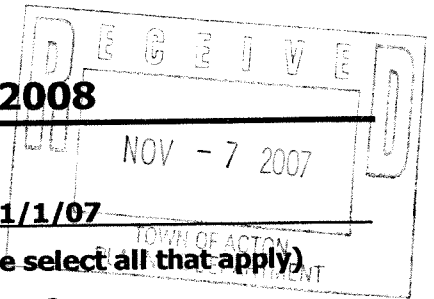


PROJECT APPLICATION FORM – 2008



Applicant: Conant Elementary School **Submission Date:** 11/1/07

Applicant's Address, Phone Number and Email

Purpose: (Please select all that apply)

Christine G. Price, Principal
Luther Conant Elementary School
80 Taylor Rd.
Acton, MA 01720

- ☒ Open Space
- ☐ Community Housing
- ☐ Historic Preservation
- ☒ Recreation

(978) 266-2550 cprice@mail.ab.mec.edu

Town Committee (if applicable): _____

Project Name: Conant Nature Trails Project

Project Location/Address: Conant School, 80 Taylor Road, Acton MA

Amount Requested: \$ 15,000

Project Summary: In the space below, provide a brief summary of the project.

Brief: Conant Elementary School is requesting \$15,000 to support a three-year initiative to create a network of nature trails on the Conant School property that would be handicapped accessible, open to the Acton community at large, and serve as a central focus of our environmental science program.

I. Narrative

Rationale and Vision: As part of our intensive curricular focus on science at Conant School, we are proposing a project that represents a new phase in our Naturalist/ Environmental Science Program: the creation of a network of nature trails in the woods surrounding our school and the publication of an accompanying trail guide for Conant School families and residents of the Acton community. Many years ago, there were a number of trails crossing the wooded areas of the property, but these have since fallen in to disrepair and have slowly overgrown. Reestablishing and expanding the trails network offers tremendous learning opportunities for our fifth grade students, who will be the primary participants in the creation of the trails and the accompanying trail guide, and whose science curriculum centers on ecology and environmental sciences. The Conant trails project benefits the wider Acton community in providing additional passive recreational spaces for Acton families to explore and enjoy. Our overarching vision is a handicapped accessible, natural area that compliments the resources of the Acton Arboretum, whose trails are contiguous to the Conant property.

Trails Project Site: The site of our proposed nature trails is the wooded area to the east of Conant School. It borders a seasonal brook and wet area that eventually drains into the Cole Brook and includes upland in the form of an unmowed meadow. It is contiguous to the back entrance to the Acton Arboretum, which affords the opportunity for additional recreation. The site offers a potential staging area that could be used for educational information about the natural area or replanting to showcase native species being crowded out by invasives, of which there are many on this property. There is also the potential for expanding the trails to follow the seasonal tributaries that cross the school grounds.

Consistency with Town of Acton Community Preservation Plan: Our proposed project is consistent with Acton's goals for open space preservation and recreation:

- "Preserve open space and develop additional public open spaces and parklands..."
- "Preserve the remaining elements of Acton's rural character, including.....open fields, agricultural lands, woodlands, waterways, and scenic vistas."
- "Enhance resources for hiking, cross-country skiing, (etc.)on conservation lands."
- "Ensure universal accessibility to recreational activities (e.g. trails, picnicking.....) at both recreation and conservation areas."

Consistency with Town of Acton Planning Documents: Our proposed project is consistent with the Town of Acton *Open Space and Recreation Plan* (OSRP), which identifies "three key open space and recreation goals:

- Preserve the remaining elements of Acton's rural character
- Protect the environment
- Improve recreational opportunities

"the residents of Acton continue to recognize the importance of open space and adequate passive and active recreational areas as critical to preserving the character of the Town and thereby the quality of life shared by its citizens."

Economic Feasibility and Leverage of Funding: Investment in the trails project, which will become a permanent addition to Acton's inventory of passive recreational resources, would seem to be quite cost effective. We are applying for CPA funds to begin a three-year initiative, with the vision of leveraging that support through private grants and corporate underwriting. We have already applied for a \$5000 grant from the Broadcom Company, at the sponsorship of a Conant parent, and are currently supported by small grant from our Parent-Teacher Organization

Population Served: The trails project will serve the Acton community as whole as a passive natural recreational area. It will specifically serve the children of Acton as an "outdoor laboratory" for their environmental studies, and provide handicapped citizens of Acton enhanced access to the natural environment.

Multiple Needs and CPA Focus Areas: The project contributes to the preservation of open space for passive recreation: "active or passive recreational use including, but not limited to, the use of land for community gardens, trails...." .

Site Control: The site of the trails project is on the grounds of the Conant Elementary School, 80 Taylor Road, which is owned by the Town of Acton.

Project Scope and Timetable:

November to May, 2007-2008:

- In consultation with Tom Tidman, Acton's Natural Resources officer, Conant fifth grade students, teachers, and volunteers will survey, map, and mark the proposed network of trails. Their work will include identifying and removing invasives as appropriate, and redesigning the staging area for the trails.

- In consultation with Dan Lenox and other landscape construction professionals, appropriate siting of the handicapped accessible trail will be identified and costs specifically identified.
- Working with local and state resources, student will gather information about the needs of the handicapped community in designing recreational areas for maximum accessibility.
- Students will create biological inventories of trail flora and fauna using standard field identification guides;
- Students will digitally photograph important geographical and botanical features of the nature trails for inclusion in the published field guide to the trails.

May to December 2008

- Improvement of trail paths begins; handicapped-accessible structures built and installed.
- Development of staging area for trails begins: siting of plantings or informational "stations" identified.
- Photographic documentation of trail sites, geographical features flora, and fauna for the field guide continues.

January to June 2009

- Construction of trails continues; students "test drive" sections of the trail with volunteers from the Acton community.

September to June, 2009-2010

- Construction of trails and staging areas nears completion. Continued "test driving" by students and invited community members.
- Working with the Natural Resources Commission, students will publish and distribute field guides through Town Hall and the Acton Public Library;
- As an extension of the published guides, students will create film clips in iMovie that can be featured on the Conant and town of Acton websites to allow visitors to take a "virtual field trip" of our nature trails.
- Trails open, June 2010

Projected Budget: \$15,000 from CPA

- Hardscape (trail substrate, handicapped accessible trail materials, trail markers, clearing of staging area site) \$12,000 (?)
 - Consulting fees \$3,000
- [\$5000 from Broadcom grant]**

Please note: We are still seeking more detailed cost estimates. Our point for reference right now is the handicapped accessible trail project at the Throreau School in Concord just approved for funding by their educational fund. Their estimated cost was 35,000.

Estimated Date for Commencement of Project: November 2007

Estimated Date for Completion of Project: June, 2010

